



UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
United States Patent and Trademark Office
Address: COMMISSIONER FOR PATENTS
P.O. Box 1450
Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
www.uspto.gov

P

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/003,361	11/15/2001	Roger Moczygemba	P-120971.01(uti)	4656

7590

02/07/2006

Cline H. White
JACKSON WALKER L.L.P.
Suite 2100
112 E. Pecan Street
San Antonio, TX 78205

EXAMINER

RINES, ROBERT D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
----------	--------------

3626

DATE MAILED: 02/07/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary**Application No.**

10/003,361

Applicant(s)

MOCZYGEMBA, ROGER

Examiner

Robert D. Rines

Art Unit

3626

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 15 November 2001.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-17 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-17 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date <u>4/15/2002</u> . | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Notice to Applicant

[1] This communication is in response to the patent application filed 15 November 2001. It is noted that this application benefits from Provisional Patent Application Serial No. 60/249,045 filed 15 November 2000. The IDS statement filed 18 April 2002 has been entered and considered. Claims 1-17 are pending.

Specification

Applicant is reminded of the proper content of an abstract of the disclosure.

A patent abstract is a concise statement of the technical disclosure of the patent and should include that which is new in the art to which the invention pertains. If the patent is of a basic nature, the entire technical disclosure may be new in the art, and the abstract should be directed to the entire disclosure. If the patent is in the nature of an improvement in an old apparatus, process, product, or composition, the abstract should include the technical disclosure of the improvement. In certain patents, particularly those for compounds and compositions, wherein the process for making and/or the use thereof are not obvious, the abstract should set forth a process for making and/or use thereof. If the new technical disclosure involves

Art Unit: 3626

modifications or alternatives, the abstract should mention by way of example the preferred modification or alternative.

The abstract should not refer to purported merits or speculative applications of the invention and should not compare the invention with the prior art.

Where applicable, the abstract should include the following:

- (1) if a machine or apparatus, its organization and operation;
- (2) if an article, its method of making;
- (3) if a chemical compound, its identity and use;
- (4) if a mixture, its ingredients;
- (5) if a process, the steps.

Extensive mechanical and design details of apparatus should not be given.

Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 150 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 150 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means"

Art Unit: 3626

and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

[2] The abstract of the disclosure is objected to because it exceeds the recommended length of 50-150 words. Additionally, the applicant describes "an alternative method" in the second paragraph of the Abstract. The Abstract should be directed to an overview of what the applicant considers the single best mode of practicing the invention. Correction is required. See MPEP § 608.01(b).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

[3] Claims 2 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

[A] A single claim which claims both an apparatus and the method steps of using the apparatus is indefinite under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph. In *Ex parte Lyell*, 17 USPQ2d 1548 (Bd. Pat. App. & Inter. 1990), a claim directed to an automatic transmission workstand and the method steps of using it was held to be ambiguous and properly rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph.

[B] Claim 2 of the present case appears to be directed to a system. However, in lines 9-16 of the claim, the applicant recites method steps executed by the system. Accordingly, it is unclear whether claim 2 is directed to a system or a method. Therefore, claim 2 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

[C] Claim 14, when analyzed in the same manner described above with respect to claim 2, is also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112 as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the applicant regards as the invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requires of this title.

[4] Claims 2 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to more than a single statutory class of invention. Under the statute, the claimed invention must fall into one of the four recognized statutory classes of invention, namely, a process (or method); a machine (or system); an article of manufacture; or a composition of matter.

[A] Claim 2 of the present case appears to be directed to a system. However, in lines 9-16 of the claim, the applicant recites method steps executed by the system. Therefore, claim 2 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claim is directed to neither a “process” nor a “machine,” but rather embraces or overlaps two different statutory classes of invention set forth in 35 U.S.C. 101

which is drafted so as to set forth the statutory classes of invention in the alternative only. Id. at 1551. 2173.05(q).

[B] Claim 14, when analyzed in the same manner described above with respect to claim 2 above, is also rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

[5] Claims 1-5, 8, 10-11, and 14-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) (United States Patent #6,345,260).

[A] As per claim 1, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method for securing an appointment with a healthcare provider comprising the steps of: said healthcare provider uploading an

appointment schedule onto a database via a network communications system (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-54 and col. 8, lines 1-10, and col. 9, lines 60-67); a patient inputting said patient's static information and said patient's current information onto said database via said network communications system (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); Fig. 1, col. 3, lines 23-30, col. 4, lines 56-60, and col. 8, lines 20-37); said patient accessing said appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10); said patient selecting an available time period on said appointment schedule for an appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-29); and said patient securing said appointment with an electronic transaction (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 4, lines 60-63 and col. 8, lines 38-57).

[B] As per claim 2, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a system for securing an appointment with a healthcare provider, said system comprising: a database for storing said healthcare provider's appointment schedule and a patient's static information and current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 43-53, col. 8, lines 1-10, and col. 8, lines 20-37); an input means for receiving said healthcare provider's appointment schedule and said patient's static information and current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); a recording means for storing said healthcare provider's appointment schedule and said patient's static information and current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-54, and col. 8, lines 1-10); a process means for said patient securing an appointment during a time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57), said process means carry out the operations of: a) displaying said healthcare provider's appointment schedule to said patient (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 2-9); b) allowing said patient to designate said time period

Art Unit: 3626

(Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-29); c) facilitating an electronic transaction on behalf of said patient to provide for payment for said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 31-37); and d) updating said healthcare provider's appointment schedule such that said time period is no longer listed as available (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-57).

[C] As per claim 3, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method in a computer system for securing an appointment with a healthcare provider, the method comprising: receiving said healthcare provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10 and col. 9, lines 60-64); storing said healthcare provider's appointment schedule in a database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-53 and col. 9, lines 60-64); receiving a patient's static information and said patient's current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-45); storing said patient's static information and said patient's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); processing said patient's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); facilitating an electronic transaction by said patient to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); and updating said healthcare provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44).

[D] As per claim 4, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches an article of manufacture comprising: A computer useable medium have computer readable program code means embodied therein for controlling a system for securing an appointment with a healthcare provider (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); Abstract), said computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture

Art Unit: 3626

comprising: computer readable program code means for causing receiving a patient's static information and said patient's current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); computer readable program code means for causing storing said patient's static information and said patient's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); computer readable program code means for causing processing said patient's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); computer readable program code means for facilitating an electronic transaction by said patient to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 31-51); and computer readable program code means for updating said healthcare provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 40-57).

[E] As per claim 5, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method of facilitating securing an appointment with a healthcare provider over a computer network comprising the steps of: receiving said healthcare provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10); storing said healthcare provider's appointment schedule in a database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-53 and col. 9, lines 60-67); receiving a patient's static information and said patient's current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); storing said patient's static information and said patient's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); processing said patient's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); facilitating an electronic transaction by said patient to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); and updating said healthcare provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-45).

[F] As per claim 8, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method wherein said electronic transaction further comprises: an administrator verifying insurance coverage for said patient by an insurance provider (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 4, lines 30-36 and col. 8, lines 30-34).

[G] As per claim 10, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method further comprising the step of: verifying insurance coverage for said patient by an insurance provider (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 30-34).

[H] As per claim 11, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method for securing an appointment with a service provider comprising the steps of: said service provider uploading an appointment schedule onto a database via a network communications system (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-53, col. 8, lines 41-57, and col. 9, lines 60-67); a customer inputting said customer's static information and said customer's current information onto said database via said network communications system (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); Fig. 1, col. 3, lines 23-30, col. 4, lines 56-60, and col. 8, lines 20-37); said customer accessing said appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10); said customer accessing said appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10); said customer selecting an available time period on said appointment schedule for an appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); and said customer securing said appointment with an electronic transaction (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57).

[I] As per claim 14, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a system for securing an appointment with a service provider, said system comprising: a database for storing said service provider's appointment schedule and a customer's static information and current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-53 and col. 8, lines 20-37); an input means for receiving said service provider's appointment schedule and said customer's static information and current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); a recording means for storing said service provider's appointment schedule and said customer's static information and current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44 and col. 9, lines 60-67); a process means for said customer securing an appointment during a time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57), said process means carry out the operations of: a) displaying said service provider's appointment schedule to said customer (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10); b) allowing said customer to designate said time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); c) facilitating an electronic transaction on behalf of said customer to provide for payment for said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 31-34); and d) updating said service provider's appointment schedule such that said time period is no longer listed as available (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-45, and col. 9, lines 45-67).

[J] As per claim 15, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a system for securing an appointment with a service provider, the method comprising: receiving said service provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10 and col. 9, lines 60-67); storing said service provider's appointment schedule in a database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); receiving a customer's static information and said customer's current information (Cummings, Jr.

et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); storing said customer's static information and said customer's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44 and col. 9, lines 60-67); processing said customer's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); facilitating an electronic transaction by said customer to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57 and col. 9, lines 45-67); and updating said service provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44 and col. 9, lines 60-67).

[K] As per claim 16, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches an article of manufacture comprising: A computer usable medium have computer readable program code means embodied therein for controlling a system for securing an appointment with a service provider (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); Abstract), said computer readable program code means in said article of manufacture comprising: computer readable program code means for causing receiving a customer's static information and said customer's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); computer readable program code means for causing storing said customer's static information and said customer's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 60-67); computer readable program code means for causing processing said customer's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); computer readable program code means for facilitating an electronic transaction by said customer to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 38-57 and col. 9, lines 45-57); and computer readable program code means for updating said service provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44 and col. 9, lines 60-67).

[L] As per claim 17, Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches a method of facilitating securing an appointment with a service provider over a computer network (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); Abstract) comprising the steps of: receiving said service provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 1-10 and col. 9, lines 60-67); storing said service provider's appointment schedule in a database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 7, lines 48-53 and col. 9, lines 60-67); receiving a customer's static information and said customer's current information (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-37); storing said customer's static information and said customer's current information in said database (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 9, lines 45-67); processing said customer's choice of an appointment time period (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57); facilitating an electronic transaction by said customer to secure said appointment (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-67); and updating said service provider's appointment schedule (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 41-44 and col. 9, lines 45-67).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

[6] Claims 6-7, 9, and 12-13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) in view of Cummings, Jr. (2) (United States Patent #5,301,105).

Art Unit: 3626

[A] As per claim 6, although Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) teaches provisions for payment for services rendered by a healthcare professional that are secured via an electronic transaction (Cummings, Jr. et al. (1); col. 8, lines 20-57), Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) fails to expressly disclose the limitations of making and electronic payment or transferring payments to the account of a healthcare provider.

[i] However, Cummings, Jr. (2) teaches a method wherein said electronic transaction is an electronic payment made to an administrator (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-38).

[ii] It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have combined the teachings of Cummings, Jr. et al. (1) with those of Cummings, Jr. (2). Such combination would have resulted in an appointment scheduling and payment system/method that collected pre-registration and billing information from the patient upon the scheduling of the appointment (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 8, lines 30-37). Additionally, such a system would have built in provisions for accommodating patient cost-sharing in cases in which the patient is responsible for sharing costs by the insurance company (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 28-34). Patient payment would have been facilitated through the use of conventional credit cards and the system would have provided for the transfer of funds to the accounts of physicians and other health care providers (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-37). The motivation to combine the teachings would have been to provide for the integrated interconnection and interaction of the patient, health care provider, bank or other financial institution, utilization reviewer/case manager, and employer so as to include within a single system each of the

essential elements to provide patients with complete and comprehensive health care and payment therefor (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 1, lines 54-60).

[B] As per claim 7, Cummings, Jr. (2) teaches a method of Claim 6 further comprising: said administrator transferring a portion of said payment to said healthcare provider (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-38).

[C] As per claim 9, Cummings, Jr. (2) teaches a method wherein said electronic transaction is an electronic payment made to an administrator and further comprising the step of: transferring a portion of said payment to said healthcare provider (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-38).

[D] As per claim 12, Cummings, Jr. (2) teaches a method wherein said electronic transaction is an electronic payment made to an administrator (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-38).

[E] As per claim 13, Cummings, Jr. (2) teaches a method further comprising: said administrator transferring a portion of said payment to said service provider (Cummings, Jr. (2); col. 3, lines 23-38).

[i] Regarding claims 7, 9, and 12-13, the obviousness and motivation to combine as discussed with regard to claim 6 above are applicable to claims 7, 9, and 12-13 and are herein incorporated by reference.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Robert D. Rines whose telephone number is 571-272-5585. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon-Fri.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Joseph Thomas can be reached on 571-272-6776. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

R.D.R.

R.D.R. 1/24/06

Joseph Thomas
JOSEPH THOMAS
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER